

Records & Archives Mgt Committee

Minutes

January 11, 2008

1:00 pm

J.V. Fletcher Library

Mary Atwood Room

Minutes

Committee Members Present: Kaari Tari, Ginny Moore, Jane Hinckley, Ellen Harde, Bob Oliphant

Town Hall Records

The committee reviewed the letter to be submitted to the Selectmen asking for an action plan to protect the records remaining in Town Hall and to improve access to active files by displaced town departments. The letter is attached at the end of the minutes.

Members present voted unanimously to send the letter to the Selectmen.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of January 4, 2008 were approved with one change.

The minutes of September 28, 2007 were approved 4-0-1 E. Harde abstained, not present at that meeting.

Visit to Sudbury Archives

We will meet at the JV Fletcher Library at 9:00am on January 25th to drive to Sudbury for a 10:00am meeting with Bill Tallentino.

Digital Commonwealth

Vivien Goldman, President of the Digital Commonwealth will be leading an information program on February 13, 2:30pm at the Westford Museum to explain what the Digital Commonwealth is and why the Town of Westford should participate. K. Tari to respond that we are interested.

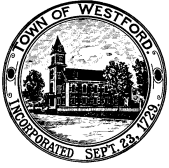
Volunteer projects

Microfilm and microfiche documents were spot-checked and found to be in good general condition. They will be reviewed again more closely once we have the survey results back from the NEDCC conservator, Mary P. Bogan.

Document management

Members discussed the search function in the new document management system being purchased by the Technology Direct, questioning how acronyms such as BOS for Selectmen will be handled.

The meeting ended at 1:45pm.



TOWN OF WESTFORD

Records and Archives Management Committee

January 11, 2008

Dear Selectmen:

The Records & Archives Management Committee is charged with advising the Selectmen on the care and management of the Town's permanent records to ensure the preservation of these important historical documents for future generations.

To assist with and compel us to preserve the Town's permanent records, Mass General Laws Ch. 66, Sections 11 & 12, both enacted in 1897 direct the Selectmen to "provide and maintain fireproof rooms, safes, or vaults for the safe keeping of the public records of their . . . town," and add that "All such records shall be kept in the rooms where they are ordinarily used, and so arranged that they may be conveniently examined and referred to. . . ."

A structural engineering report issued in December of 2007 found that the volume of records stored on the second floor of Town Hall had compromised the structural stability of parts of the building. Town Hall was subsequently evacuated and emptied of the high-density files that were the main cause of this problem. After nearly a month, the departments are in temporary locations and records are either still in Town Hall or at the old Water Department.

A plan needs to be put in place and acted upon in order to allow departments to resume working with their records in each department's office environment and to safely store town records now in Town Hall. Not only will this allow departments to bring back the staff efficiency expected by the public, but it will also bring the Town back into compliance with MGL Ch. 66, Sec. 11 & 12.

We understand that it will take time to complete a Town Hall Feasibility Study and implement the necessary repairs to bring usable office space back to town hall, but in the mean time, it is essential that when you consider space for temporary offices, that you also consider the files as an integral part of each and every office. If some offices may return to the first floor of Town Hall now that the high density files have been removed, please work with the Building Commissioner to complete that part of the plan, so that we minimize the expenses associated with unnecessary multiple moves of departments.

Records that are not used on a daily basis – our archives – may be stored temporarily (considered to be approx. two years) at an alternate, off-site location during renovation, repair, or construction, according to Terry French, Senior Records and Information Manager at the State Archives.

We have been offered document storage space at a rate of \$1.00 per square foot per month at 515 Groton Road, which will provide climate control, key card secure access and sprinklers/smoke alarms for fire protection. The Town Clerk plans to request a reserve fund transfer from the Finance Committee for that purpose.

When considering active file storage for departments, please remember that security, temperature and humidity control, and fire protection must all be considered, according to State Law. Temporary storage of these files may become costly if all three requirements for safe storage are not met by the storage space.

As an example, the Board of Health has seven high density files and four regular four-drawer file cabinets that are accessed on a daily basis. One high density file is the equivalent of four four-drawer lateral files. If a records storage trailer were considered to keep their files “. . . where they are ordinarily used . . .”, then all but the fire protection concerns would be met. In order to address fire protection, fire proof files would need to be used. Fire proof files cost approximately \$1,000 per file and the Board of Health would need one for each of the 32 file cabinets of documents.

When planning for longer term temporary housing for departments, please consider the benefits of purchasing space, such as 515 Groton Road, currently for sale for \$4 million (plus income for a 3 year lease in part of the building), which would allow all of these displaced departments, their records, and potentially other departments as well to move under one roof at minimal expense compared to the cost of building a new municipal building.

If we may assist you with any part of your planning for the temporary and/or permanent location of town offices and records, please let us know.

We request a response to our letter in the form of a plan by the end of January 2008.

Sincerely,

Records & Archives Management Committee
Virginia Moore, Chair; Jane Hinckley; Ellen Harde; Sandy Martinez; Robert Oliphant and
Kaari Mai Tari

Legal references:

Chapter 66: Section 11. Fireproof vaults and safes

Section 11. Officers in charge of a state department, county commissioners, city councils and selectmen shall, at the expense of the commonwealth, county, city or town, respectively, provide and maintain fireproof rooms, safes or vaults for the safe keeping of the public records of their department, county, city or town, other than the records in the custody of teachers of the public schools, and shall furnish such rooms with fittings of non-combustible materials only.

Chapter 66: Section 12. Arrangement of records

Section 12. All such records shall be kept in the rooms where they are ordinarily used, and so arranged that they may be conveniently examined and referred to. When not in use, they shall be kept in the fireproof rooms, vaults or safes provided for them.